



PRESS RELEASE

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ILLEGAL ALIEN SENTENCED TO 9 YEARS IN PRISON FOR HOSTAGE TAKING AND OTHER CHARGES

PHOENIX – Fernando Gonzales-Barrera, age 37, of Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico, was sentenced here today to 108 months in prison by U.S. District Judge James A. Teilborg. Gonzales-Barrera was found guilty by a federal jury on March 5, 2004 of Hostage Taking, Conspiracy to Take Hostages, Harboring Undocumented Aliens, Conspiracy to Harbor Undocumented Aliens and Alien in Possession of a Firearm.

The defendant and two others were arrested on August 2, 2002, after being found holding 57 undocumented aliens at gunpoint in a residence in Phoenix. Two assault type rifles and two fully loaded magazines were also found. The defendant claimed duress as his defense at trial and testified that he was a smuggled alien who was working off his smuggling fee. The defendant also stated he had been living at the residence for two months and saw approximately 200 undocumented aliens move through the house.

When imposing sentence, Judge Teilborg stated that this was a case about choice and the defendant chose to join the other smugglers in holding the other undocumented aliens at the residence. Gonzales-Barrera will be deported at the completion of his sentence.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Phoenix Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Lisa Jennis Settel and Camille Bibles, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-02-900-PHX-JAT
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